



Covenant to Care for Children

*Helping Connecticut's
Children in Need.*

120 Mountain Avenue
Suite 212
Bloomfield, CT 06002
Telephone (860) 243-1806
Fax (860) 243-0100
www.covenanttocare.org

Good afternoon, Senator Harp, Representative Walker, Representative Abercrombie, and members of the committee:

I am Caryl Hallberg, Executive Director of Covenant to Care for Children (CCC). We are in our second quarter century mobilizing caring and faithful people to advocate for, mentor, and provide direct services to the children and youth of Connecticut who are abused, neglected or at-risk. I am here this afternoon to speak to you about the Governor's DCF Budget proposal that has been endorsed by Commissioner Katz and is now under your consideration.

In this current proposal, Covenant to Care has been consolidated under Board and Care – Adoption and Foster. We have in the past and are currently in the DCF budget as a separate line item for a reason. CCC offers services and works with the grassroots public to serve children in a truly unique and direct way. We were designed as, and remain, an impressively flexible and adaptable organization, able to rapidly and with great efficacy meet the variances over time of DCF focus, organization and need.

CCC services cross all the divisions and disciplines of DCF. We do not fall or fit within any one area of focus. We are:

- highly active in prevention,
- many of our services allow families and children to achieve permanency,
- we provide needed resources that create the possibility or support of kinship care,
- we ease the removal process,
- provide needed items to prevent removal,
- aid in reunification,
- help build confidence and self esteem,
- help in the setting up of a household for a child aging out of the system,
- aid newborns and new parents in achieving readiness for the child,
- we work with children at CJTS and at Solnit,
- assure better school attendance,
- supply items to, and on occasion aid in the upgrading of, DCF visiting and waiting rooms,
- support families experiencing domestic violence,
- educate and advocate to end child abuse and neglect.

As DCF implemented the DRS system CCC shifted its own outreach, so that we now work in partnership with all the DRS providers accepting requests from their social workers.

Most recently, without fanfare, we've worked directly with our Faith-Based Organization (FBO) partners in the Newtown who have had families impacted by the December tragedy. Families asked us to redistribute the holiday toys they had planned for their child to children who had need. Our FBO partners have used us to distribute the many items for children they have received from their sister FBOs across the USA.

DCF staff works with CCC on a voluntary basis. Our most recent figures for the quarter ending December 31, 2012 shows we are working directly with 568 social workers, 232 of these social workers are in a covenant with an FBO in their region. We know we impact the case loads of many more social workers because often one worker will make a request for children not in their caseload but in the caseload of a co-worker sitting near their desk.

The DCF social workers with whom we work are in every division of DCF, are located in every DCF office, and recognize the impact we have on their caseloads.

In addition to DCF social workers, we support the child caseloads of agencies, hospitals, clinics, residences and schools throughout Connecticut who work with abused, neglected or impoverished youth. Long before RBA was law, Covenant to Care for Children operated within the guidelines and structures of RBA.

CCC recognizes that in the scheme of the State budget our \$168,181 is a very small amount. What we ask you to consider is what is being achieved by this dollar amount. Through these state funds CCC was able to document meeting the individual needs of 16,147 children in FY12 with only 30% of our FBO partner's reporting service data. (Working with hundreds of lead volunteers does not necessarily assure timely data collection) Using averages a conservative estimate of actual children receiving critical basic need services through CCC in FY12 would be 44,703.

For every dollar in the state budget, CCC can document a return of \$5.41 in goods and services directly to the most vulnerable children in Connecticut.

In FY12 CCC worked with 212 diverse FBO across the state of Connecticut whose thousands of congregation members, acting as CCC volunteers, are able to meet the immediate needs of the children we serve.

We applaud the work that Commissioner Katz and her team have done at DCF. We applaud all moves toward efficacy and efficiency, which also enhance the outcomes for Connecticut's children. This does not mean that all programs should be placed in a silo.

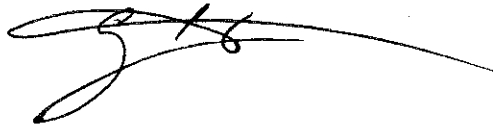
Covenant to Care for Children does not fit in a silo. This is our strength, allowing us to have the enormous, though mostly quiet, impact we have on the positive outcomes for our most vulnerable children. It is what allows CCC to best serve DCF and the State of Connecticut. It is what makes us unique. This is also our weakness making it difficult to explain our ability to serve so many children with a paid staff of 8. We do not fit in a silo.

Covenant to Care for Children should not be subject to a single division of DCF in which a manager may not understand or appreciate the larger impact of what we do, seeing only what piece

augments his or her division. CCC should not be at the discretion of an individual who may decide that CCC is not of enough value to that division. It is most assuredly true that we are not strongly connected to Board and Care since we provide no residential services and the percentage of children in foster or formal kinship care whom we serve remains a smaller percentage of our overall impact within DCF.

The legislature recognized this high level of service diversity, cutting across all of the broad goals and divisions of DCF, long ago and at that time assigned Covenant to Care for Children its current line item designation. CCC recognizes and appreciates the across the aisle support we have always enjoyed, but we also appreciate and welcome the scrutiny that having our own line item brings. We strongly urge that Covenant to Care for Children remain a separate line item at current levels as found in the FY13 State budget.

Thank you for your time, your support and your dedication to this work. If you have any questions or would like more information please let me know.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. H.', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

